Critical Thinkers on the Thresholds of Posthuman Philosophy

William Gladstone & George Tyrrell

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Comparatively few persons have a “turn” for anything.
Our capacities are chiefly developed out of elements which
before culture were not distinctly discernible.

W. E. Gladstone to his son W. H. Gladstone

Our task is one, not of argument, but of exposition;
We have but to let Truth appear, and then bid men “Come and see!”
And of these, some will go away according to the
power of seeing they bring with them.

George Tyrrell

The phenomenological method is not the diametric opposite of the ontological;
It is a more comprehensive one than the latter,
whose merits it preserves and whose inadequacies it tries to remedy.

Leslie Dewart

I

BACKGROUND

In this essay I contemplate the possibility of *posthuman philosophy* within the religious and theological schools of thought. In doing this, I do not focus on the traditional philosophical humanism which characterizes the scholastic and neo-scholastic approach within Western philosophy. Rather, I focus on a "dehellenized" philosophical way of thinking that, I hold, characterizes the thresholds of a philosophical consciousness. That is to say, the Hellenistic philosophical principles that support Western humanism, are not used to support my understanding of a philosophy appropriate to posthumanity. As an existential philosopher, with a view to evolving as a posthuman philosopher, I evaluate aspects of the philosophical consciousness of William Gladstone (1809-1898) politician and George Tyrrell (theologian) in terms of both humanism and posthumanism from a phenomenological philosophical perspective. I realize that the phenomenological notion of humanity (in contrast to the classical idea of humanism) may not be adequately grasped by all philosophers. It seems to me that although many professionals appear to be somewhat conversant with general philosophical and theological notions that are pertinent to humanity, they nonetheless

are struggling to clarify their understanding of an emerging posthuman philosophy. Yet, despite the growing popularity of research into posthumanism in academia, most academics, have but a general and somewhat sketchy knowledge of the significance of posthuman philosophy. Not all research into posthumanity is undertaken as philosophy. But rather most is undertaken as a dramatic exercise of human imagination or of fantastic reasoning. Thus, it is understandable that some researchers lack an adequate philosophical vocabulary to express their thoughts for a philosophy on the thresholds of posthumanity.

My intention in this essay is to explore a new philosophical path, somewhat similar to Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) intention, but with an eye to posthumanity, that includes freeing philosophy from its traditional dependence on dogmatism. Kant wrote:

> I am obliged to the learned public for the silence with which it has honoured my Critique for a considerable time; for this proves a postponement of judgement and thus some suspicion that in a work which leaves all accustomed paths and sets out on a new one in which one cannot at once find one's way, something may perhaps lie through which an important but at present dead branch of human knowledge may receive new life and fruitfulness, and also a care not to break and destroy the delicate shoot by an overhasty judgement. [1]

[1] Kant, Immanuel (1953:151) Pr*olegomena to any Future Metaphysics that will be able to present itself as a Science* Manchester University Press.

This essay is intended to bring relief for the “seasoned” and tired analytic philosopher weary of entering upon a process of moving from the known to the unknown. In light of a looming posthuman philosophy, I make no effort to further refine my efforts at philosophizing within the classical tradition, but take inspiration from Kant, and with an eye to posthuman philosophical understanding, engage in philosophizing in a new way which may not at once be readily appreciated. My hope is that a philosophical continuity between the *human* being and the *posthuman* being will eventually be recognized by serious, non-trendy, contemporary thinkers. Contrary to popular, and trendy, opinion, I hold that non-living entities do not qualify, or at least, do not merit human attributes (except in science fiction) but not in philosophy. My invitation, therefore, is for the reader to consider the phenomenological philosophical method of interpretation of human experience as an alternative to the analytic approach in understanding posthumanity. Once grasped, the phenomenological approach avoids many of the epistemological pitfalls of analytic philosophy and heightens one’s consciousness to provide a satisfying experience in the posthuman context of philosophizing.

In the posthuman context, the focus on the theological question of God will shift from a classical Hellenistic speculative perspective on the nature of God, to the existential question on the nature of the person within the presence of God. The former is an epistemological (objective) focus, whereas the latter is a phenomenological

(subjective) focus. Many theologians have observed that talking about God in any traditional sense does not interest philosophers today. My emphasis, therefore, is not on the traditional Western approach to arguments for God's existence, but on existential issues relevant to posthuman experience interpreted through a non-hellenized philosophy, i.e., phenomenology. It is precisely these existential issues that posthuman philosophy needs to address in preparation for future theological discussion. I do not rely on the traditional epistemological systems of Western European philosophy and theology when envisioning the thresholds of posthuman philosophy. Rather, I suggest that the notion of human consciousness be taken as the means of investigation. While some psychologists and social scientists may hesitate to claim knowledge about a *de facto* posthuman culture, all of us have some knowledge of present human culture, albeit interpreted through Hellenic principles — in the Western context at least. In Western culture we have experienced human organic life as naturally evolving. We soon became conscious that the evolving organic life ends. To the contrary, most Christians believe that life, or the soul, is eternal and continues in some manner beyond our present organically embodied conscious state. To understand human life as evolving at the thresholds of posthumanity, is as natural as it was for our immediate predecessors to understand life as evolving from brute animal to humanity.

In critically reflecting about the thresholds of posthumanity, I

have chosen a holistic, and person-centred, philosophical path to questions concerning human meaning (or consciousness). The person-centred and holistic approach to reflection on the posthuman philosophical thresholds that I offer is an alternative to the traditional and theoretical humanistic perspective. I maintain that theology, holistically understood, will present an authentic interpretation of the transcendental questions of the presence of God in posthuman life. My hope is that individuals, particularly seasoned and disaffected philosophers, will be able to graduate beyond classical epistemology and consider consciousness as a more appropriate means to philosophical understanding in the posthuman context.

In this essay, I do not present either a historical, nor a systematic examination of the notion of posthumanity. Rather, I undertake a phenomenological (de-hellenized) approach to understanding posthumanity. Following upon the section "Outside the Guild" below, I present some ways of reflecting on emerging posthuman philosophical issues. I consider five evolutionary turning-points in human consciousness. The first turning-point is to begin *thinking diversely*, which recognizes the evolutionary process in posthuman consciousness as furthering diversity, not focusing on identifying uniformity or oneness, as traditionally done in humanism. The second turning-point is to begin *conceiving philosophically*, which marks an intellectual shift in understanding from popular folk-lore perspectives to formal reasoned philosophical perspectives. The

third turning-point consists of *understanding holistically*, which acknowledges the acceptance of a transcendent factor, yet unknown, in human experience. By holistic understanding I mean that the identity of the consciously thinking agent is greater than the sum of its parts. The fourth turning-point is *reflecting theologically*, an intellectual stance that imports the humanist concept of God for re-consideration (re-location) within a posthuman experience. Or, alternatively expressed, where is "god" in the posthuman world? The fifth turning-point is *acting creatively*, which inaugurates a new status of the human being as agent and as participant in creation, i.e., not only as an observer of creation. To my mind, these evolutionary turning-points are best understood, at this time at least, as "preliminaries" to philosophical reflections on the thresholds of posthumanity. Research into a philosophy on the thresholds of posthumanity may be done by any thinking human agent conscious of the evolutionary development of classical humanism to existential posthumanism.

My research was inspired by the writings of two late 19th and early 20th century Western religious thinkers. They are George Tyrrell and William Gladstone. As precursors of posthumanism, I reflect on some of their interpretations of Christian theology in light of preparing thresholds of posthuman philosophy. While they are not our contemporaries, they are part of recent Western modern history and many of the issues they raised remain relevant for us contemplating the thresholds of posthuman philosophy. Each

thinker has offered differing, but complementary points of view to his understanding of Christian theology within Victorian culture. The reason for choosing these two authors is that sufficient time has passed to allow us to view their thinking in relation to our thoughts on entering the thresholds of posthumanity. To be conscious of the development of their philosophical and theological thought is helpful for us today as we reflect on our past understanding and re-configure our knowledge in terms proper for a posthuman context.

II

THEOLOGIZING OUTSIDE THE GUILD

Professional theology originated as a formal activity with the establishment of the universities. Professional theology was intended to serve the Church in clarifying and formalizing doctrine and dogma. At the time of the academic guilds it was used by some pastors (Protestant and Catholic) in the spiritual direction of their better-educated parishioners. However, my current purpose is not spiritual direction, but to theologize outside any contemporary ecclesial guild. The contemporary term *ecclesial* refers to democratic relationships within the Christian faith-life. The classical term, *ecclesiastical,* refers to the hierarchical government of the Christian community. The former is subjective with emphasis on the agent, the latter is objective with emphasis on the object (i.e. the non-agent). The doctrinal and dogmatic statements extant in ecclesiastical institutions derive from theological controversies concerning the belief of the church as founded philosophically on Hellenistic principles. As a consequence, over the centuries various rhetorical accretions have clouded reflection in theology preventing the development of an epistemology that would have kept pace with contemporary belief. This was so, since the philosophical language supporting theology which had developed in the medieval period

and had become stagnant in the face of novel scientific discoveries. The existential theological reflection on novel scientific discoveries continued to take place in an ecclesial context that differed from the speculative theological reasoning that took place in an ecclesiastical context.

I undertake this theological reflection as preparation for future thinking at the thresholds of posthumanity. Critical theological reflection is a unique human activity and an innate capacity of the human mind to interpret religious experience. In this critical reflection I choose consciousness instead of epistemology as the means of theological interpretation. Conscious critical thinking reaches into the depths of the mind and discloses "others," who are "not-me." Conscious critical thinking incorporates the believers' best efforts at formulating an authentic Christian anthropology and an understanding of life and purpose in light of organic evolution. I conceive critical thinking, or critical consciousness, in theology as undertaking three roles. The first is to relate the human being to actual experience. The second is to understand truth as an authentic relationship between "me" and "not-me." The third is to advance the ecclesial community in self-understanding appropriate to a posthuman context.

Critical consciousness reveals that the human mind can transcend the social, political and religious experience that was

originally expressed within a traditional theological guild. [2] Critical consciousness discloses that philosophical and theological systems are not universal, but are contingent upon the culture that supports them. It further shows that our Western heritage reveals a movement from monarchical government of an ecclesiastical hierarchy to democratic governance of ecclesial authority. In short, critical consciousness discloses the thresholds to a posthuman philosophical interpretation of life, at least in the Western world. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) was among the first philosophers to recognize the beginning of posthuman thresholds in philosophy. He held that pre-theoretical humanity acted as a self-organizing whole whose activity was not based on the fixed laws of social and scientific mechanics. Pre-theoretical humanity acted according to the consciousness of the human spirit. These have been identified as holism, emergent evolution, and various other philosophies of evolutionary and historical development. [3] Theoretical and metaphysical concepts do not create the vital urges with which humanity organizes itself, rather, existential (political) experience does. [4] In posthuman philosophy the notion of agency (cause and effect) takes on a new meaning in light of the created human being

[2] Thomas, E. E. (1938:183-90) *The Political Aspect of Religious Development* Heritage & Unicorn Press.
[3] Brandt, Richard (1941:55) *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher: The Development of His Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge* Harper & Brothers.
[4] Thomas, E. E. (1938:202) *The Political Aspect of Religious Development* Heritage & Unicorn Press.

exercising a co-creative political role in life.

I reject the form of the earlier Medieval Christian theology, influenced as it is by outdated Hellenic principles. This rejection is necessary because Medieval theology does not resonate with a contemporary cosmology, as noted by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. [5] By reflecting outside the guild, I avoid the baggage of the disputed ecclesiastical political and power-related issues that emerged at the Reformation/counter-Reformation period but which are no longer culturally relevant. Thus, the way is opened for posthuman investigations in *Theological Philosophy*. [6] In philosophically contemplating religious experience, I take seriously the contributions of the Enlightenment with its epistemological, historical, and evolutionary insights. The Enlightenment, which began in Europe, had introduced new and legitimate human interpretations of religious experience which, however, have become problematic today. North America, given its historical patrimony, continues to suffer from an inadequate philosophy in theological thinking as evidenced in the unsatisfied legacy traceable to the philosophical and theological issues once prevalent in pre-Victorian England. [7] During this time and, well into the reign of

[5] Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre (1957:40) *Le Milieu Divin* Collins.
[6] I use the term as coined by Leslie Dewart (1969:11) in *The Foundations of Belief* Herder & Herder.
[7] From a *political* philosophical perspective, George Grant (1918-1988) writes: "It is only possible to write here generally about the relation between Protestant theology and the new science. It sprang initially from one negative agreement:

Victoria, England remained virtually isolated from Continental philosophical thought. However, critical examination of English philosophical and theological texts reveals some influence of German theological perspectives.

Selecting the philosopher-theologians William Gladstone and George Tyrrell, I assess their thinking in the culture of Victorian England as it was beginning to be influenced by Continental, and particularly German, thought. In evaluating the work of William Gladstone and George Tyrrell, I do not necessarily endorse their respective conclusions. I present their thinking because they found themselves having to respond to a changing cultural landscape that affected the interpretation of their religious experience. I find myself in a similar situation of having to respond to the changing cultural landscape of an inherited Hellenistic philosophical tradition bringing about what I recognize as thresholds to posthuman philosophy. Both men were Christian and sought ways to relate their faith experience within the social order of their day. In Tyrrell's case the Roman Catholic Church formed the social context of his thought

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both the theologians and the scientists wished to free the minds of men from the formulations of mediaeval Aristotelianism, though for different reasons. … They criticized the mediaeval teleological doctrine with its substantial forms as preventing men from observing and understanding the world as it is. The criticism by the theologians is less well known and less easily understandable in an age such as ours. They attacked the mediaeval theological doctrine as the foundation of what they called "natural" theology, and that theology was attacked because it led men away from fundamental reliance on Christian revelation." *Technology and Empire* Anansi (1969:20).

and in Gladstone's case it was the political structure of England that formed the context of his thought. Each found that the inherited structures of the ecclesiastical and the political order (both founded on Hellenic philosophical principles) were not adequately equipped to relate to the changing cultural and social environment of the time. As a result of the Continental philosophical influence, theology in Victorian England was challenged to revise its classical philosophical foundation. This revision contributed to the construction of the thresholds to posthuman philosophy.

At the beginning of the 19th Century, Rationalism was in vogue in England and on the Continent. Elliot-Binns has distinguished two attitudes of rational thought that were hostile to religious, and in particular Christian, consciousness. One attitude of thought was the open and complete rejection of the whole Christian system, typical of France; the other attitude, which typified Germany, tolerated Christianity, but gradually reduced it to a caricature of its former self. [8] The existential and less rationalistic Germanic thought, that later evolved into phenomenological philosophy under the influence of Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl, resonated with George Tyrrell. Although he died before any formal development of the phenomenological school of thought in England, his thinking was definitely headed in that direction.

[8] Elliot-Binns L. E. (1964:133) *Religion in the Victorian Era* Lutterworth Press.

My investigation of some preliminaries to the thresholds of posthuman philosophy continues in that direction. Phenomenological reflection on the legacy of classical philosophy satisfies one's subjectivist mood and, as well, consciously engages contemporary critical thinkers. And my critical consciousness of the legacy of classical philosophy is a subjective awareness of the shift towards posthuman philosophical thresholds.

I follow the phenomenological way of thinking suggested by W. K. C. Guthrie (1906-1981). He reminded us that philosophers do not think in a void. In fact, our thoughts are products of three interrelated factors: our temperaments, our experiences, and our reading of previous philosophers, all of which make up our particular life-worlds. [9] One of the pioneers of the phenomenological method was Edmund Husserl, who thought outside the theological guild. According to him, we can reflect on all experience, inasmuch as it presents itself to consciousness, within a clear, existential, methodological framework. All conscious knowledge, in contrast to Hellenistic epistemological knowledge, is embedded in a cultural context. Hellenistic epistemological knowledge transcends cultural contexts. In phenomenology the world of actual experience takes precedence over the abstracted and theoretical world of the sciences. Langdon Gilkey (1919-2004) who also thought outside the

[9] Guthrie, W.K.C. (1975:19) *The Greek Philosophers from Thales to Aristotle* Harper Torchbooks.

theological guild, notes that the public task of the theologian is *primarily* the analysis of life with regard to its religious beliefs and aspects, and *secondarily* an analysis of life with regard to its economic, sociological or psychological dimensions, though each of these can have a religious basis and ground. [10]

My contemplation on posthuman philosophical thresholds, though undertaken personally, is not an isolated and private exercise. My interpretation has been influenced by reading the works of various philosophers, such as Edmund Husserl, and theologians such as George Tyrrell, and politicians such as William Gladstone. But, as an agent, I remain solely responsible for the interpretation of their thoughts. The theological style of this essay falls within Jeff Astley's understanding of doing "ordinary theology," which focuses on personal insights arising out of experience and the theological consciousness that takes place outside the professional philosophical or theological guild. According to Astley, original theology is rarely done in our day. He maintains that theological thought is often undertaken as the study of other people's ideas. It is rarely a self-critical reflection on one's own religious experience and interpretation. [11] In other words, contemporary theology retains the classical character of

[10] Gilkey, Langdon (1985:330-50) "The role of the theologian in contemporary society" in *The Thought of Paul Tillich* (eds. J. L. Adams, W. Pauk, R. Shinn) Harper.

[11] Astley, Jeff (2002) *Ordinary Theology: Looking, Listening and Learning in Theology* Ashgate.

scholasticism and offers but new variations of old ideas. Although modern theology may have begun in the academy, it cannot remain a theoretical academic discipline, as John Apczynski noted. [12] Theology, of its perpetual purpose, must address the questions, problems, and data that arise from within all aspects of the human and the posthuman context. The critical consciousness of any theologian (this means anyone trying to understand ultimate meaning) addresses his or her *lebenswelt* (life-world) as an individual in community. A theologian's *lebenswelt* is constituted by the existential *milieu* in Teilhard de Chardin's sense of the cultural, social, and religious context of life.

Theologians on the thresholds of posthuman philosophy must continually search for new and meaningful ways to interpret religious experience outside the traditional theological guild of scholasticism. Today, one cannot understand the legacy of the past as fixed and dead any more than one can consider the lives of those former critical thinkers as historical fossils. From the phenomenological perspective, these thinkers may be physically dead, but their "living" legacy continues to shape the present, as it did the past. Their living legacy exists, not by virtue of its own historical right, but by virtue of its significance for the present moment in philosophical consciousness of the thresholds of

[12] Apczynski, John (1999) *Theology and the University* 1987 Annual Publication of the College Theological Society vol 33 (University Press of America).

posthumanity. Critical phenomenological contemplation, in a Christian ecclesial context, must be in conscious dialogue with artists, musicians, novelists, poets, psychologists, and always with the Scriptures. Omitting the Christian aspect, is often characteristic of the Western scientific bias. The phenomenological contemplation on posthuman philosophical thresholds incorporates, but does not literally reproduce, various aspects of the classical human temperament, experience, and understanding of both deceased and living philosophers. At this point, it should be easily understood that cultures which never experienced the humanism of scholasticism, or the Western Enlightenment, i.e., Asian cultures and some Arabic cultures, need not concern themselves with posthuman philosophical interpretation. Unless they have adopted Western values, their focus will be on their cultural context vis à vis the West.

III

FIVE POSTHUMAN THRESHOLDS

In light of the above, I now offer a reflection on some issues arising within a phenomenological interpretation characterizing five thresholds of posthuman philosophy. They are: (1) Thinking Diversely, (2) Conceiving Philosophically, (3) Understanding Holistically, (4) Reflecting Theologically, and (5) Acting Creatively.

Thinking Diversely

I have written this essay primarily for the critically consciousness Christian individual to increase the awareness of the reader with respect to the emergence of the thresholds of posthuman philosophy. The emphasis of this essay is on the active development and cultivation of a posthuman consciousness through which one may come to recognize his or her status as co-creator of one's personal life-world. Posthuman philosophy of a theological kind will require consciousness of one's culture. Consciousness of one's culture includes contact with Eastern and non-Christian civilizations. The cultural traditions and expressions of faith outside the Western context adds diversity to one's experience and interpretation of posthuman philosophy.

The art of developing a posthuman philosophy from the Christian perspective will necessarily incorporate an appreciation of the diverse scientific and techno-digital discoveries of the day. Thinking diversely is a venerable tradition within the history of Christian theology and is to be retained in a posthuman context. Within his studies, George Tyrrell noted that Christians in the early Church wandered intellectually among the Gentile nations to find vessels to hold treasures for which they found no receptacle in the house of their birth. Through engagement with diverse cultures, the primitive Christians discovered a variety of contexts in which they could articulate the development of their Christian life. [13] Posthuman Christians are at thresholds of accomplishing something similar in the 21st Century.

Christian theological philosophers, have followed two distinct, but related, phenomenological paths concerning human understanding; one by the individual and the other by the collective. The individual path of understanding is characterized by contemplating the recorded life of Jesus by his faithful followers who produced the written gospels. These texts suggested how the life of the Christ of faith was structured and understood, and dependent upon the evangelist's memory. Each of the four gospels reflects a particular memory of the person of Jesus as the central

[13] Tyrrell, George (1906:131) *Lex Credendi: A Sequel to Lex Orandi* Longmans.

focus which discloses a diverse picture of the Nazarene.

The second path of understanding is the shared consciousness of the significance of Jesus's life. Accordingly, the various theologians within the church produced diverse theologies and these theologies altered the consciousness of other theological interpreters. Such diversity is not negative. It is, in fact, part of the evolutionary process. The theology of the early church developed among those members of the community who were most disposed to sharing their Christian experience. It is to be remembered, according to Robin Young, that an early church theologian "was a person like Hesiod or Orpheus, or any of the diviners and visionaries inspired by one of the members of the pantheon." [14] These early church theologians interpreted their particular experiences in light of their cultural understandings of the life of the Christ. Eventually, distinct questions arising from particular personal experiences presented problem for hermeneutic interpretation. St. Augustine provides one of the earliest recorded examples of theological diversity of the Christian experience. As Richard Woods has noted, Augustine's contribution in shaping our interiorly directed (and diverse) theological activity grew from his awareness of the presence of God at the deepest level of human consciousness. Augustine's deep personal experience shone through his troubled spirit, often

[14] Young, Robin D (1997:681-90) "Theologia" in the Early Church *Communio: International Catholic Review* 24 no. 4.

desirous of a total communion with God, but he was often left without a sense of God's presence. [15]

Eventually, the initial diverse conceptualizations of the faithful developed into a collective and uniform theological perspective that became normative for the Christian interior life and for some Catholic religious communities. For example, the two diverging and distinct schools of theology referred to as the "Alexandrian" and "Antiochene" schools which developed to address Christological questions were based on their geographical and intellectual differences. These schools were not homogenous groups and never existed as such in any concrete sense. While their diverse perspectives encompassed convergent themes and approaches, neither became a uniform system of theology. (This suggests to me that posthuman philosophy, deriving from various human themes, will not evolve into a uniform system of thought.) The presence of these schools indicated that diversity was an integral part of Christianity's historical development for some time after the death of the apostles. However, Christianity could not continue to flourish exclusively upon the charismatic gifts that sustained the experience of the early Christians. Another model for a fulfilling life became necessary. As Christianity evolved, the community began to interpret its experience from within a philosophical consciousness.

[15] Woods, Richard (1989) *Christian Spirituality: God's Presence Through the Ages* Thomas More Press.

In time, between the Judaic and Hellenistic world views, a *rapprochement* prepared the way for a new articulation of the Christian experience. No longer was the imminent return of Jesus the driving force for sustaining charismatic Christian belief. An interpretation of the Christian experience, heavily dependent on the Hellenistic philosophical perspective, began to develop particularly in the Christian East which cast the Christian experience in a new and diverse light.

This development continued for centuries. As Brian Gaybba has pointed out, the various schools of theological reflection on the Christian experience were developing long before the Reformation of Christendom occurred. [16] These schools had developed to advance the priorities and perspectives of particularly important religious orders such as the Franciscans and Dominicans. In the Middle Ages, a change in the structure of theological interpretation came about with the controversial introduction of Aristotle's philosophy. The scholastic method of interpretation, influenced by Aristotelian and Platonic thought patterns, was the best tool for intellectual argument in that age, as evidenced by Thomas Aquinas's synthesis of Aristotle's cosmology and the Christian message. Eventually this theological synthesis became dominant in the Roman Church. It is significant that through the incorporation

[16] Gaybba, Brian P (1988) *Aspects of the Mediaeval History of Theology: 12th to 14th Centuries* University of South Africa Press.

of Aristotle's cosmology, Christian theology entered a human dynamic whose existential potential has only partially been realized by Western theologians to this day. Perhaps the philosophical human dynamic rooted in Aristotelianism, when re-articulated, will afford postmodernity a different outcome.

Schneiders points out that the medieval synthesis of philosophy and theology held together well into the middle of the 20th century, when the culture-shattering events of the two world wars, the technological revolution, liberation movements of all kinds, an explosion in knowledge, and rapid developments in philosophy, the humanities, psychology, and the other social sciences, brought the comprehensive hold of the medieval synthesis on the Christian mind and imagination to an end. [17] Out of the new *milieu,* diverse theological ways of thinking have been created and now shape the hermeneutic of Christian consciousness at various thresholds of posthumanity.

One can identify diverse theological perspectives in the consciousness of the Roman Catholic theologians during the so-called Modernist crisis of the early 20th century. This movement challenged scholasticism as the dominant theological method. During the early 20th century, the Magisterium of the Roman Church was increasingly vigilant over initiatives by theologians desiring to

[17] Schneiders, S (1986:270) Theology and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals or Partners? *Horizons* 13 no. 2.

open its doors to the worlds of science, phenomenology, and democracy. Such vigilance caused some philosophers and theologians to shy away from the historical-critical method of interpretation. The Church in George Tyrrell's time hesitantly embraced anything that supported existential subjectivity. With the publication by Pius X of *Lamentabili* in 1907, as well as the anti-modernist encyclical *Pascendi,* also published in 1907, the Roman Catholic Church self-consciously, and with full intention, withdrew from participation in the philosophical trends developing outside post-reformation medieval culture. (Posthuman thinking was not yet an option.) This withdrawal led to the continuing misperception that the Catholic Church was a monolithic fortress presenting a single public discourse for all peoples, at all times, and in the same way, thereby excluding diversity.

In spite of this, the Church's tradition is instructive for us today as we reflect on the Christian experience individually and collectively. For example, as Christianity spread during the Patristic period, diverse views grew regarding both the manner and extent to which Hellenistic thinking should be used to interpret the revelation of the Christ through Jesus of Nazareth. Some, such as Tertullian (160-225 CE) and Tatian (120-173 CE) were passionately opposed to Hellenistic philosophy and culture for fear that its influence would adulterate the gospel. Others, however, such as Justin Martyr (112-165 CE) and Clement of Alexandria (150-212 CE),

endeavoured to express the message of the gospel using Hellenistic philosophical concepts. [18] Notwithstanding Tertullian's protestation, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Hellenistic philosophy entered into the service of the Church. Henceforth, Christian philosophy, the baptised pagan way of thinking of Aristotle and Plato, became an *ancillae theologiae.* The use of ideas boldly borrowed from traditions outside of one's own, while not without controversy, has always been a living part of the Christian *traditio.* Indeed, S. C. Carpenter (1877-1959) has noted that borrowing from outside one's tradition was a Catholic trait of the Modernist theologians. He wrote:

> Tyrrell, and those who were with him were the original 'Modernists,' were wholesale re-constructors, but they were enthusiasts for continuity. Their attempt broke down, or was driven underground, because the great Church which in the thirteenth century had been liberal enough to include the Aristotelianism of the Schoolmen, and the Troubadour methods of the Friars, was not able to entertain the sharp contrast between the historic faith and alleged historic fact which they put forward as a legitimate development. It broke down, but the Tyrrell school, and even Loisy for a long time,

[18] Watts, F & Williams, M (1988:32) *The Psychology of Religious Knowing* Cambridge University Press.

were profoundly Catholic in intention and desire. [19]

Since the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, the positive results of a critical scholarship, particularly within the study of scripture due to Modernist thinking, have been apparent. [20] The modern trend in theology which is away from the singular scholastic approach towards a diversified phenomenological approach, continues to develop and will likely significantly characterize the thresholds of posthuman philosophy. The diverse ideas introduced through the Modernist theologians are, in fact, foundational for a phenomenological reflection on the Christian consciousness. Dare I say that through advancement of a critical phenomenological reflection diverse scholarship will further inaugurate the thresholds of posthuman philosophy of the type that George Tyrrell hoped for. If Maude Petre (1863-1942) is correct in her Introduction to Tyrrell's essays.

> Hence I have not feared to put in fragments, in spite of their lack of finish, for the sake of some flash of insight which they convey; and they will serve their purpose if they do what their author was always satisfied to do, namely to give the lead to some other mind which can carry the search a

[19] Carpenter, S C (1932:74) *Supernatural Religion in its Relation to Democracy* Ivor Nicholson & Watson.
[20] O'Hanlon, Daniel (1966:11-29) Catholic Theology: A Brief History *Current Trends in Theology* (Wolf, D. J. & Schall, V. eds) Image Doubleday.

little further. [21]

Conceiving Philosophically

Conceiving philosophy is actually a way of "thinking after" about that which has arisen out of reflecting on one's initial experience. In his article, "Faith as Existential Choice," William Edie has noted that Tertullian, the Carthaginian theologian, considered the "natural man" as simple, rude, uncultured and untaught, not yet ruined by Greek education. According to Tertullian, the "natural man" is *anima naturaliter Christiana.* [22] Edie further notes that Tertullian invited his readers to return to their own religious experience, ignoring prior theory, to explore the Christian experience and find an authentic route to God. Thus, their conceptions of experience would be philosophically non-Hellenic. Similarly, the Athenian philosopher, Socrates (died 399 BCE), sought to clarify the thinking of poets, politicians, and whomever he met in the public forum. In doing so, Socrates did not follow the accepted folklore of the day. Rather, he undertook a responsible approach to thinking and conceived his ideas philosophically. [23] I recognize the "natural man," the *anima naturaliter Christiana* in Tertullian's sense, as the agent-philosopher interpreting experience

[21] Tyrrell, George (1914:xi) *Essays on Faith and Immortality* Edward Arnold.
[22] Edie, J. Earle, W. Wild, J (1963:32) *Christianity and Existentialism* Northwestern University Press.
[23] Edie, J (1963:153).

at the thresholds of posthuman philosophy. The posthuman philosopher conceives life differently than in the classical days when the system of theological guilds was in place. Developments in philosophy bring about developments in theology. And, as Heraclitus (approx. 535-475 BCE) once noted, since everything appears to be perpetually in flux, no final philosophy or theology should be expected even in posthumanity.

The Western intellectual tradition rooted in the Greek *milieu* supports the philosophical conception of an abiding *humanum,* or what it means to be human in the cosmos. As Nicolas Berdyaev (1874-1948) noted, Greek philosophy does not conceive what a human being is in the particular, but conceives what human beings are in general. Such a conception arose out of Platonism. [24] For the Hellenes, an individual personality is a non-historical emendation of the universal personality. Medieval scholastics, although influenced by Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy, found great difficulty in articulating the idea of the individual person as an abiding *humanum.* Nonetheless, Duns Scotus, the medieval Franciscan theologian, concluded that particular beings were the sole end of creation and the most important of things. [25] This view seems to be well established in the West. But, philosophical contemplation on the thresholds of posthumanity challenges this view of the

[24] Berdyaev, Nicolas (1957:133) *The Beginning and the End* Harper Bothers.
[25] Berdyaev, Nicolas (1957:118).

individual person as the most important of things with the intent of fabricating a "transitional" human being as a proper *humanum* for the future.

In existential thinking, the mechanical and technical languages of the 18th and 19th centuries are no longer useful in interpreting Christian consciousness. Max Wildiers agrees with Teilhard de Chardin's critique of the uselessness of outdated language in theological interpretation. [26] Along a similar vein, Kenneth Cauthen calls for a new Modernism within the North American philosophical community. [27] To my mind, existential phenomenology constitutes a useful philosophical discipline for the theologian entering upon the thresholds of posthuman consciousness.

Contrary to Duns Scotus phenomenological consciousness posits the primacy of the person, as an agent, over things and recognizes the value of personality as the existential centre of the posthuman subject. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was one of the fathers of existential consciousness who figures prominently in adapting religious insights from personal interior reflection. However, it is necessary in our time to philosophically question such

[26] Wildiers, Max (1983:143-56) The Fundamental Experience of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin *The Desire to be human: A Global Reconnaissance of Human Perspectives in an Age of Transformation….* (L. Zonneveld & R. Muller eds) Mirananda.
[27] Cauthen, Kenneth (1997) *Toward a New Modernism* University Press of America.

interior reflections in light of the growing thresholds of posthumanity. Reflection on experience presupposes a human relationship within the community, characteristic of the "I-Thou" philosophical thought of Martin Buber (1878-1965). It is through living in community that an individual develops as a person. The Zulu and Xhosa languages have a useful word for this notion of community: *ubuntu. Ubuntu* has been translated as, "I am what I am because of who we all are." The Zulu and Xhosa African languages emphasize allegiances and relations within the community. To extend the meaning somewhat, another translation would be: *The belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity*, that is the *humanum* Thus, it would be reasonable in a posthuman community to re-conceive philosophically the Christian consciousness.

In light of a posthuman culture I suggest the abandonment of a universal (classical) individualism and its replacement with the notion of an abiding *humanum* that encapsulates the qualities of each unique human being. Given that individuals are unique, *Gaudium et Spes,* the Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church, conceives the inherent value and meaning of each individual person philosophically. According to the Pastoral Constitution, one's individuality does not confer sovereignty but rather reflects human dignity. This notion of dignity is conceived philosophically in a posthuman perspective by James Watson in his

thesis, "A Universal Human Dignity: Its Nature, Ground and Limits." [28] Within this Christian philosophical perspective an abiding *humanum* (human dignity) accrues through a right relationship with God. Christian humanism (and by extension Christian posthumanism) rests on human dignity that is ultimately grounded in the understanding of God's revelation in Jesus of Nazareth. Within the posthuman Christian community, the *imitatio Christi* becomes the embodiment of an abiding *humanum* that secular philosophers are likely to grasp only vaguely. The challenge for philosophers as they contemplate the thresholds of a postmodern world will be to find a place for the *humanum.* In short, to find a place for the presence of God.

In posthuman consciousness the *humanum* reflects variations and similarities of William James's five characteristics of all religious life. [29] He affirms that: first, the visible world is part of a spiritual universe; second, union with that higher universe is our true end; third, inner communion (prayer) with such spirituality is a process where work is truly done and produces effects in the physical world; fourth, thereby, a new zest is added to life; and last, we achieve an assurance of safety and peace in the process. It seems to me that many of the present-day philosophers of posthumanity

[28] Watson, James David (2016) unpublished PhD thesis [in philosophy] University of Exeter.
[29] James, William (1909:485) *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* Longmans Green.

fail to treat these philosophical conceptions in their contemplation. Rather, they are greatly occupied with the techno-digital and scientific aspects of transhumanism (i.e., transitional humanism) and the altered human organism.

Understanding Holistically

As Christians mature, we ought to re-think our faith experiences. This re-thinking, if undertaken, takes place in varying degrees and from various perspectives. For Catholics, and Christians in general, Vatican II has symbolized the end of a conventional understanding of the faith and introduced a new consciousness to understanding the faith. This consciousness is rooted in phenomenology and critical reflection. [30] I suggest that this consciousness constitutes posthuman thresholds of holistic philosophical understanding. Vatican II was not merely an exercise in up-dating doctrine and dogma, an *aggiornamento.* Rather, the Council itself was a phenomenological interpretation of Catholic theological consciousness, a *ressourcement* of a particular type. Generally, three features appear in the notion of *ressourcement,* but only one has my attention here. The first feature is a return to patristic and medieval sources, and a second feature is a return to the works of St Thomas Aquinas. The third feature, which concerns me here, is a dialogue with the new philosophical movements and thinkers of the 20th

[30] Kobler, John (2000:89-95) Vatican II Theology Needs Philosophy *The Modern Schoolman* 78, no. 2.

century, with particular attention paid to the Enlightenment, modernity, and liberalism from a *holistic* perspective. Particular attention must be paid to a holistic understanding in a posthuman world.

Post-Vatican II philosophers, in particular Catholics, contemplate humanity in its "secular" context, as well as its religious status. This has raised complex problems for Catholic philosophers re-defining themselves within the public forum. In the public forum, Catholic philosophers co-exist alongside many other Christian and non-Christian religious philosophers, but not necessarily as equals. Since the late 19th century, some Catholic philosophers have partially abandoned their classical self-understanding and have entered upon a re-evaluated self-understanding, often from an historical perspective. To my mind, this change began within the Modernist movement that sought to bring theological consciousness up to date with modern scientific discoveries. Individual Catholic philosophers who entered upon such a self-understanding abandoned the idea of any single cultural expression supplying the required philosophy of a believing community. Instead, they accepted a holistic understanding in its place.

In posthuman consciousness the human and social sciences must not be understood solely in rational and mechanistic terms. Rather, the holistic perspective, as expounded by J. C. Smuts, recognized

that the "hole" is other, and greater than the sum of its parts. [31] That is, any living organism has significant meaning beyond its limitations. This understanding discloses a philosophical consciousness superior to the rational and mechanistic perspective dominant since the Enlightenment.

The sciences alone cannot furnish us with a sufficient knowledge of our life-worlds, nor act as a substitute for a holistic interpretation of our experiences. The idea that it is required of science and techno-digital advancement to replace ethics and religion seems to be a major preoccupation of many posthuman academics. Science and techno-digital advancement provide various methods through which humanity may study itself, but they do not provide human consciousness. In other words, science and techno-digital advancement are systems of knowledge with defined and set boundaries. To the contrary, the purpose of a holistic posthuman philosophy is to conceive the person as an open-ended question. In short, what does it mean to be human in a posthuman world? And where do we place God? From a holistic perspective, no satisfactory explanation of the person can be given in a system with defined and set boundaries. Holistic understanding always remains free from constraint and open to evolutionary development. Applying this insight to psychopathology, Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) believed that

[31] *Holon* (in Greek) is the neuter case of *holos* meaning "whole," but with the philosophical qualification noted by Smuts.

it is a mistake to try to set up any principle of the whole, or *totum*, or set up a scientific universal schema as a point of orientation for research on the human person. Instead, inquiries ought to be made within an attitude of faith to understand the infinite extent of who we are and what we know**.** [32] Such a task, I suggest, is becoming increasingly significant as philosophers contemplate what it means to be human as we enter upon various thresholds of posthumanity.

We live in an age of an excess of mechanical and techno-digital analysis. Contemporary generations have experienced the ascendancy of mechanical technology and digital technology over the philosophical wisdom required to make proper use of technology. In order to reverse this situation, posthumanity requires an appropriate philosophy, not only of right action, but of responsible agency. A holistic philosophy and theology do not eclipse modern science as knowledge, but, rather, seek to disclose the wisdom inherent in the human agent who is more than the sum of its parts. The desire for an abundant life, that is, for more than is concretely available in life, is a motivating factor for inquiry into human existence. For the philosopher, an abundant life may be sought through a holistic consciousness that is aware of a relationship to the presence of God as the source and the end of truth and value in the world.

[32] Jaspers, Karl *General Psychopathology* [1997 reprint] Johns Hopkins University Press.

Literature, philosophy, religion, psychology, and science disclose a life that one may interpret holistically. Whoever reflects upon life holistically must do so from a personal perspective and make particular existential choices. Further, philosophers must decide to what degree humans are conscious of transcendent reality. They must decide if the transcendent reality that humans have experienced, or think they have experienced, is a psychological fiction or not. If philosophers do accept that transcendent reality is part of existence, it would appear to the traditionally-minded philosopher as a religious view. On the other hand, if philosophers accept that transcendent reality is not part of existence, it would appear to the holistic thinker as a deficient philosophical view. Such is the philosophical challenge facing the thinker at the thresholds of posthumanity.

For those who do choose a holistically interpreted religious path, philosophy offers an almost infinite opportunity to reflect on the presence of the divine in human experience. Thus, the next issue is to consider what it possibly means to reflect theologically in a posthuman context.

Reflecting Theologically

Theological contemplation on religious experiences discloses the qualitative evolution of the person in contrast to an organic evolution. That is, in organic evolution “I” am differentiated from

my environment, the "not-me," physically. In qualitative evolution "I" am differentiated metaphysically, that is self-consciously, within my environment. In the chronological order of experience, theology is an "after thought" when reflecting on experience. I understand theology, as undertaken today, to be a comprehensive term to include a philosophical consciousness that assigns meaning to the Christian life. Thus, at the posthuman thresholds of experience a comprehensive theological philosophy includes: folklore, common sense, reasoned or academic thinking and the imaginative speculation that humans undertake about themselves. However, this is not to say that they are all of equal value to the posthuman thinker.

One intention in this essay is to introduce to the inquirer an approach to Western philosophy that does not rely on Hellenic principles to interpret experience, but one that is appropriate for the posthuman theological context. My approach does not aim to produce a final theology that will be the same for all people in all situations and in all cultures at all times. My intention is not *classically* Catholic. Rather, my intention is a *contemporary* Catholic one that encourages a critical examination of the stages of cultural evolution in which persons act as agents creating their own theological philosophy in the public forum. [33] For the religiously

[33] As *Gaudium et Spes* notes: "Culture, since it flows from humanity's rational and social nature, has continual need of proper freedom of development and a legitimate possibility of autonomy according to its own principles. … All this

minded, theological philosophy discloses a universal *milieu* that is common to that which is human and to that which is divine and pervades all cultural experience. This *milieu* enables relationships to be identified between that which is divine (godly) and that which is human. In a philosophical contemplation of the theological type (Dewart's Theological Philosophy) Western philosophers are served well by a mental schema based on experiential phenomenological interpretations of life. Such a mental schema does not ignore modern scientific knowledge, thus, does not end in uncritical belief, or fideism. From a critical phenomenological perspective, any mental schema rejects a dichotomy between modern science and religion. Allerd Stikker has noted that

> before interdisciplinary integration can be successfully evolving in many different sections of society, it is necessary to solve a fundamental dualism which lies at the root of present society. This dualism lies in the misconception, which has been in existence for hundreds of years, that religion and science are two different worlds. It is the synthesis between these two 'disciplines' which forms a starting point for further integration and progress in the

demands that, provided they represent the moral order and the common interest, people should be entitled to seek after truth, to express and make known their opinions, to engage in whatever art they please; and, finally, that they should be accurately informed about matters of public interest." Flannery, Austin (1996:233) *Vatican II* Costello Publishing Company.

world. [34]

Through its own synthesis, I suggest that posthuman theological philosophy is approaching thresholds capable of solving such an antithetical dualism.

Theological philosophy is a descriptive, rather than a deductive discipline. The starting point for existential theological reflection is the human condition. Theological reflection interprets experience as a dynamic activity, that is to say, in relational terms and not in pre-determined fixed categorical terms. Reflecting theologically does not create or formulate new categories of values and virtues. Rather, reflecting theologically constructively criticizes the stifling ideological, sociological, and psychological aspects of classical religious experience thus enabling the religious thinker to assign new creative meaning to life. In my experience it has become clear that a theoretical theology based on modern scientific or mechanical concepts of the Enlightenment is no longer sufficient to meet contemporary human needs satisfactorily. Without significant qualification the historical-critical method, characteristic of modern theology, will not adequately serve posthuman reflection on the religious life. In my experience, a personal existential reflection

[34] Stikker, Allerd (1983:171) Interdisciplinary Integration and Dualism in Society *The Desire to be human: A Global Reconnaissance of Human Perspectives in an Age of Transformation….* (L. Zonneveld & R. Muller eds) Mirananda.

upon the religious life transcends the boundaries of denominational communities. Further, the primary focus of a personal reflection on the religious life is not private but is a reflection by the person-in-community. Because personal reflection is able to transcend denominational limitations, it is less likely to become subject to an institutional and political ideology.

Reflecting on the religious life is a way of thinking by which theologians, acting as spiritual directors, attempt to understand the religious experience of the faithful and help them toward spiritual maturation. The experience of the presence of that which is divine, or the presence of God, coupled with the growth in personal faith, is foundational to Christian holistic theological consciousness.

Theological consciousness is not tantamount to Religious Studies. Religious Studies undertaken as a sociological discipline is not Theology. Religious Studies leads to knowledge about religions as social phenomena. It is of the order of *convictional* language. Nor is theology, which is of the order of *confessional* language, a religious study in a sociological sense. Theology is reflection on a personal experience of faith that is a reflection on the existential issues in the religious life. In contemporary Western theological understanding, subjectivity and inter-subjectivity are replacing ideological objectivism as the primary way of interpreting theological consciousness. A subjective, inter-subjective, and ecumenical theology is requisite for Christians in the posthuman

context and must be based on a knowledge of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Metaphysical quests that focus on doctrine and dogma claiming to prove that God exists are futile. The existential theologian, reflecting on the religious life, does not look for a polemical opportunity to win a theological argument. Rather, the existential theologian's primary concern is to express and clarify the experience of faith within a given culture.

Religious experience provides the opportunity for philosophical reflection of a theological kind. A theological philosophy discloses a spiritual world capable of being known within a human cultural context and within a variety of cosmologies. I accept that no cosmology exhausts the entirety of religious understanding, just as no theology exhausts all religious interpretation. To my mind, in trying to understand the religious life exhaustively, through a theological philosophy, is beyond human consciousness, but not beyond our experience as mystery. Theological philosophy is most fruitfully interpreted holistically.

Acting Creatively

We are born into a physical world not of our making. The world continues to evolve in a complex way that humans cannot stop or curtail, yet are personally involved in the transformations occurring within it. This means that Western Christians are living with anxiety and tensions that accompany the end of conventional religion. The

West is often philosophically understood as a materialized and secularized culture that denies the transcendent. In the minds of some philosophers, this material secularity causes anxiety and tension that prevents the proper recognition of a transcendent dimension to life. I contend, however, that this material secularity ironically affords an opportunity for us to become consciously and creatively involved in life's evolution.

The vocation of the Church, its great commission, is the care of souls, the *cure animarum.* The *cure animarum* pertains to the redemption of both the individual and the community. Traditional reflection on the Christian life, as an exercise of the *cure animarum,* is carried on within, not without, a community of faith that is itself the custodian of the Christian message. The community is the *locus* of faith of the individual believer and, as well, acts as the mediator of the faith for future generations of believers. Thus, the community of faith is the primary *milieu* for acting creatively in light of posthuman religious thresholds.

In spite of the emphasis on ecumenical dialogue in the contemporary world, Reformation and counter-Reformation polemics continue to surface. This is evidenced in the rise of a theological fundamentalism that has eclipsed the *cure animarum.* Because of this eclipse, many of us who participate in the life of the traditional church experience alienation from the Church. Many traditional institutions have ceased to be communities of faith that

support the *cure animarum* because of a secular techno-digital influence, as Gabriel Moran has shown. [35] Thus, many of us are estranged from the religion we inherited and we are left with "spirit-less" churches. Western culture continues to become increasingly secular, which accounts for the fact that Christian churches have become social institutions with minimal spiritual creativity. As a consequence, we must create an alternative theological philosophy to understand religious life in a posthuman context. Traditional Christian anthropology understands God as transcendent and outside of creation, whereas, a posthuman Christian anthropology suggests the presence of God as immanent in, yet transcendent to, creation. The traditional forms of Christian anthropology, their expressions, conceptions, and customs, have evolved from the world of Greco-Roman-Germanic civilisation and to some degree this civilization remains part of our present-day experience. As Van de Pol states, these Greco-Roman-Germanic conventions are so interwoven with Western civilization that profound changes in this pattern of culture necessarily bring about changes in conventional Christianity. [36] In other words, changing the civilization changes Christianity. Hence the need to proactively and creatively shape our future posthuman culture.

[35] Moran, Gabriel (1972:7) *The Present Revelation: The Search for Religious Foundations* Herder & Herder.
[36] van de Pol, Willem Hendrick (1968) *End of Conventional Christianity* Newman Press.

Acting creatively implies grasping the meaning of one's life and purpose and living out of that reality in co-operation with that which is "other and greater" than oneself. According to Arthur Fabel, the destiny of matter (including human matter) in the universe may well be controlled by the life that arose from within it. [37] We have a greater destiny than that which resides merely in our biological life because we can think and love. Humans distinguish between *destiny* and *fate*. Humans are capable of creating careers for themselves. Human destiny, individually and collectively, is to endure through time, whereas human careers are within time and transient and terminal. Destiny is a personal and communal vision of the future, whereas fate reflects a non-cooperative end to the future of organic life. In a theological philosophy destiny trumps fate.

We may not be able to alter certain circumstances in which we find ourselves but we can prevent these circumstances from altering us and diverting us from our destiny. The Christian life is the *called* life and it is somehow our destiny to live it as a co-operative venture. It is possible to stifle the call of our destiny, but not to destroy it. Some philosophers undertake reflection on the Christian life more seriously as they grow older. Through this process, we compare our Christian life with our secular life. Within Christian consciousness, God's eternal presence renders all creation intelligible in its light.

[37] Fabel, Arthur (1983:87) Teilhard de Chardin and the New Scientific Synthesis *The Desire to be human: A Global Reconnaissance of Human Perspectives in an Age of Transformation….* (L. Zonneveld & R. Muller, eds) Mirananda.

"The light of God is not a blinding light such as the artificial lights that men employ. In its light all other lights burn brighter, and time takes on the meaning of eternity." [38] Those conscious of the Christian life act creatively in this light and for deeper reasons than those not conscious of this light. It is the religious experience, not a philosophical metaphysics that affects the individual's philosophy, both in the human and posthuman context. The Christian religious life is an organic incarnated life, not a spiritually disembodied life. Humanity is not a disembodied reality like God, as it were, subject to no creed, but contemplating them all without the necessity of bodily experience. Rather, the incarnated life is a co-creative life within bodily experience.

The drawback to acting creatively, on the part of some philosophers, is that they emphasize what is unique to them while underrating what is common to all humanity. In reflecting on common experience, it becomes clear that Christian religious experience has remained substantially the same under all its successive embodiments. [39] This is probably so since reflecting on the Christian life is a creative, reasoned activity in concert with the *logos* made flesh. Creative activity in concert with the *logos* is not constrained by doctrinal systems or social or cultural constructs of human fabrication. It is an experiential fact that reflecting on the

[38] Petre, Maude (1998:50) *A Week End Book of Thought and Prayer* [Peter Erb, ed] Catholic Scholars Press.
[39] Lilley, Leslie (1908:77) *The Programme of Modernism* Putnam's Sons.

Christian life is a poetical, philosophical, theological, ethical, and scientific activity. Such reflection is, at root, nothing less than the consciousness of the presence of God, both immanent and transcendent, which leads to the awareness of a fulfilled human being.

The experiences of William Gladstone and George Tyrrell help us here to contrast a human and posthuman philosophical understanding. A humanistic, that is, Hellenistic Christian anthropology was at the root of the theological thinking of both Gladstone and Tyrrell. According to them, we need God's help to be ourselves. However, the presence of God does not undertake to do for us what we can do for ourselves. Were this so, God would thereby dis-empower us. Only in so far as we cannot help ourselves is help from the presence of God a real kindness and authentic help. All inauthentic help weakens us and retards our human growth and spiritual development. In short, it prevents us from acting creatively. God's help, or empowerment, leads to an active creativity on our part, whereas all dis-empowerment leads to the spiritual death of the religious life. Yet, as each philosopher develops an understanding of a Christian anthropology each will not arrive at the same conclusion. Their respective conclusions, however, will most likely lay the foundations for new thresholds of a posthuman future.